



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street

San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Susan Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
1214 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congresswoman Davis:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

For over 20 years, the EPA has focused on improving water quality throughout the border region by engaging with U.S. and Mexico stakeholders and by funding critical wastewater infrastructure in Mexico and the United States. Since the mid-1990's, we have worked with the North American Development Bank (NADB), Tijuana's water utility (CESPT), and Mexicali's water utility (CESPM) to identify and repair vulnerable infrastructure that may result in pollution impacts to the United States. The risk of sewers collapsing in Tijuana is intensified during heavy rains when sewers are used as storm drains and substantial loads of sediment from unplanned settlements on steep hillsides are washed into the sewers. This was the case in February 2017 and again in December 2018 when major wastewater collectors in Tijuana collapsed, sending raw sewage into the Tijuana River across the border and into San Diego.

The EPA has invested over \$50 million in wastewater infrastructure improvements in Tijuana to prevent sewage spills from entering California via the Tijuana River. With matching funds from Mexico, we have repaired or replaced 6 miles of wastewater collectors in Tijuana, constructed 9 new manholes and rehabilitated 25 existing manholes. These efforts provided wastewater collection service to 420 new households that used to discharge into canyons and open spaces. The project to repair the Colector Poniente, a portion of which collapsed in December 2018, was divided into four phases (segments 1A, 1B, 2 and 3). Repairs to segment 2 were completed in March; repairs to segment 3 (the 2.5-mile section immediately upstream of the section that collapsed) and segment 1B will be completed this month; and construction to replace the final segment (1A) will begin this month. Furthermore, rehabilitation of several other high-risk sewage collectors, including Colector Internacional, which runs adjacent to the border and is the largest collector in Tijuana, is in the final stages of design. Construction of these new projects is expected to begin in mid-2021.

In Mexicali, the EPA has invested over \$35 million and helped leverage an additional \$54 million from Mexico to fund wastewater infrastructure upgrades. Last year the EPA invested \$331,000 for emergency portable wastewater pumps to prevent raw sewage from reaching the New River during repairs of broken sewers. While there is still much work to be done to eradicate pollution in the New River, these infrastructure upgrades and emergency equipment have made a substantial difference in mitigating the levels of pollutants in the river. We are funding over \$6 million in high-priority wastewater infrastructure rehabilitation projects

in Mexicali which will have a direct benefit to California; Mexico will invest at least 50 percent of the total cost.

The EPA co-leads the binational U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program: Border 2020, which is a forum used to coordinate on projects and efforts carried out by local, state and federal agencies on both sides of the border. Through binational task forces, we pursue joint priority setting and identify available resources to address transboundary pollution. Key areas of focus have included air quality monitoring at ports of entry that provide emissions data to stakeholders and residents, modeling coastal water quality to understand the impacts from transboundary sewage spills and inform future response strategies, and interventions to reduce asthma-related emergency room visits. The EPA's support of these efforts has led to improved capacity in the border region to mitigate health and environmental risks.

We are initiating discussions with Mexico on the new binational environmental framework to succeed the current Border 2020 program. I will ensure that local priorities are considered and incorporated into that framework, along with mechanisms to garner engagement and participation from U.S. and Mexico stakeholders.


The transboundary nature of pollution issues requires ongoing communication and collaboration between the two countries at all levels of government to address problems at the source. U.S. and Mexican agencies continue to be challenged by limited resources and staffing to address transboundary pollution, compounded by competing priorities within their respective jurisdictions. In addition, changes in local, state and federal administrations in Mexico and the United States and the associated leadership transitions require additional investments of time to align priorities, build working relationships, and secure commitments to addressing the needs of border communities.

For more than two decades, the EPA has worked collaboratively with stakeholders from the United States and Mexico to improve water quality along the border. Most recently, the EPA convened several high-level stakeholder meetings with federal, state and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and Congressional offices, to foster open discussions about viable solutions to the transboundary pollution affecting border communities. These meetings have served to provide common understanding of challenges and opportunities to better address transboundary pollution in a coordinated manner. We also regularly share up-to-date information with your office.

I am committed to maintaining regular engagement with your office and invite your participation at the next scheduled border convening in Coronado, California, on Wednesday June 5, 2019, co-hosted by the EPA, Customs and Border Protection and the International Boundary and Water Commission.

If you have any questions on this matter or would like additional information, please contact me at (213) 215-3104 or via email at stoker.michael@epa.gov, or refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Brent Maier, at (415) 947-4256 or via email at maier.brent@epa.gov.

Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Juan Vargas
U.S. House of Representatives
2244 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Vargas:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
B40B Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

MAY 14 2019

Dear Senator Harris:

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Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
SH-331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

MAY 14 2019

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

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Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
1626 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Levin:

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Regional Administrator

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Scott Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Peters

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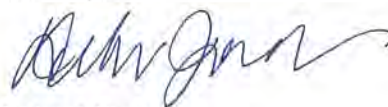

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If you have any questions on this matter or would like additional information, please contact me at (213) 215-3104 or via email at stoker.michael@epa.gov, or refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Brent Maier, at (415) 947-4256 or via email at maier.brent@epa.gov.

Sincerely,


 Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street

San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Susan Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
1214 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congresswoman Davis:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

For over 20 years, the EPA has focused on improving water quality throughout the border region by engaging with U.S. and Mexico stakeholders and by funding critical wastewater infrastructure in Mexico and the United States. Since the mid-1990's, we have worked with the North American Development Bank (NADB), Tijuana's water utility (CESPT), and Mexicali's water utility (CESPM) to identify and repair vulnerable infrastructure that may result in pollution impacts to the United States. The risk of sewers collapsing in Tijuana is intensified during heavy rains when sewers are used as storm drains and substantial loads of sediment from unplanned settlements on steep hillsides are washed into the sewers. This was the case in February 2017 and again in December 2018 when major wastewater collectors in Tijuana collapsed, sending raw sewage into the Tijuana River across the border and into San Diego.

The EPA has invested over \$50 million in wastewater infrastructure improvements in Tijuana to prevent sewage spills from entering California via the Tijuana River. With matching funds from Mexico, we have repaired or replaced 6 miles of wastewater collectors in Tijuana, constructed 9 new manholes and rehabilitated 25 existing manholes. These efforts provided wastewater collection service to 420 new households that used to discharge into canyons and open spaces. The project to repair the Colector Poniente, a portion of which collapsed in December 2018, was divided into four phases (segments 1A, 1B, 2 and 3). Repairs to segment 2 were completed in March; repairs to segment 3 (the 2.5-mile section immediately upstream of the section that collapsed) and segment 1B will be completed this month; and construction to replace the final segment (1A) will begin this month. Furthermore, rehabilitation of several other high-risk sewage collectors, including Colector Internacional, which runs adjacent to the border and is the largest collector in Tijuana, is in the final stages of design. Construction of these new projects is expected to begin in mid-2021.

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in Mexicali which will have a direct benefit to California; Mexico will invest at least 50 percent of the total cost.

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We are initiating discussions with Mexico on the new binational environmental framework to succeed the current Border 2020 program. I will ensure that local priorities are considered and incorporated into that framework, along with mechanisms to garner engagement and participation from U.S. and Mexico stakeholders.


The transboundary nature of pollution issues requires ongoing communication and collaboration between the two countries at all levels of government to address problems at the source. U.S. and Mexican agencies continue to be challenged by limited resources and staffing to address transboundary pollution, compounded by competing priorities within their respective jurisdictions. In addition, changes in local, state and federal administrations in Mexico and the United States and the associated leadership transitions require additional investments of time to align priorities, build working relationships, and secure commitments to addressing the needs of border communities.

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Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
1626 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Levin:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Scott Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Peters

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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Sincerely,


 Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Juan Vargas
U.S. House of Representatives
2244 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 14 2019

Dear Congressman Vargas:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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Sincerely,


for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
SH-331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

MAY 14 2019

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

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Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street

San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
B40B Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

MAY 14 2019

Dear Senator Harris:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler concerning transboundary pollution along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Administrator has asked me to respond. I share your concern about the safety and well-being of residents in San Diego and Imperial counties. Since my appointment as Regional Administrator, I have elevated our engagement on Mexico border issues as a top priority and have met with many border stakeholders over the past eight months to find technical and financial solutions to reduce transboundary pollution. I am committed to working with you to leverage all available resources to address these critical needs.

For over 20 years, the EPA has focused on improving water quality throughout the border region by engaging with U.S. and Mexico stakeholders and by funding critical wastewater infrastructure in Mexico and the United States. Since the mid-1990's, we have worked with the North American Development Bank (NADB), Tijuana's water utility (CESPT), and Mexicali's water utility (CESPM) to identify and repair vulnerable infrastructure that may result in pollution impacts to the United States. The risk of sewers collapsing in Tijuana is intensified during heavy rains when sewers are used as storm drains and substantial loads of sediment from unplanned settlements on steep hillsides are washed into the sewers. This was the case in February 2017 and again in December 2018 when major wastewater collectors in Tijuana collapsed, sending raw sewage into the Tijuana River across the border and into San Diego.

The EPA has invested over \$50 million in wastewater infrastructure improvements in Tijuana to prevent sewage spills from entering California via the Tijuana River. With matching funds from Mexico, we have repaired or replaced 6 miles of wastewater collectors in Tijuana, constructed 9 new manholes and rehabilitated 25 existing manholes. These efforts provided wastewater collection service to 420 new households that used to discharge into canyons and open spaces. The project to repair the Colector Poniente, a portion of which collapsed in December 2018, was divided into four phases (segments 1A, 1B, 2 and 3). Repairs to segment 2 were completed in March; repairs to segment 3 (the 2.5-mile section immediately upstream of the section that collapsed) and segment 1B will be completed this month; and construction to replace the final segment (1A) will begin this month. Furthermore, rehabilitation of several other high-risk sewage collectors, including Colector Internacional, which runs adjacent to the border and is the largest collector in Tijuana, is in the final stages of design. Construction of these new projects is expected to begin in mid-2021.

In Mexicali, the EPA has invested over \$35 million and helped leverage an additional \$54 million from Mexico to fund wastewater infrastructure upgrades. Last year the EPA invested \$331,000 for emergency portable wastewater pumps to prevent raw sewage from reaching the New River during repairs of broken sewers. While there is still much work to be done to eradicate pollution in the New River, these infrastructure upgrades and emergency equipment have made a substantial difference in mitigating the levels of pollutants in the river. We are funding over \$6 million in high-priority wastewater infrastructure rehabilitation projects

in Mexicali which will have a direct benefit to California; Mexico will invest at least 50 percent of the total cost.

The EPA co-leads the binational U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program: Border 2020, which is a forum used to coordinate on projects and efforts carried out by local, state and federal agencies on both sides of the border. Through binational task forces, we pursue joint priority setting and identify available resources to address transboundary pollution. Key areas of focus have included air quality monitoring at ports of entry that provide emissions data to stakeholders and residents, modeling coastal water quality to understand the impacts from transboundary sewage spills and inform future response strategies, and interventions to reduce asthma-related emergency room visits. The EPA's support of these efforts has led to improved capacity in the border region to mitigate health and environmental risks.

We are initiating discussions with Mexico on the new binational environmental framework to succeed the current Border 2020 program. I will ensure that local priorities are considered and incorporated into that framework, along with mechanisms to garner engagement and participation from U.S. and Mexico stakeholders.

The transboundary nature of pollution issues requires ongoing communication and collaboration between the two countries at all levels of government to address problems at the source. U.S. and Mexican agencies continue to be challenged by limited resources and staffing to address transboundary pollution, compounded by competing priorities within their respective jurisdictions. In addition, changes in local, state and federal administrations in Mexico and the United States and the associated leadership transitions require additional investments of time to align priorities, build working relationships, and secure commitments to addressing the needs of border communities.

For more than two decades, the EPA has worked collaboratively with stakeholders from the United States and Mexico to improve water quality along the border. Most recently, the EPA convened several high-level stakeholder meetings with federal, state and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and Congressional offices, to foster open discussions about viable solutions to the transboundary pollution affecting border communities. These meetings have served to provide common understanding of challenges and opportunities to better address transboundary pollution in a coordinated manner. We also regularly share up-to-date information with your office.

I am committed to maintaining regular engagement with your office and invite your participation at the next scheduled border convening in Coronado, California, on Wednesday June 5, 2019, co-hosted by the EPA, Customs and Border Protection and the International Boundary and Water Commission.

If you have any questions on this matter or would like additional information, please contact me at (213) 215-3104 or via email at stoker.michael@epa.gov, or refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Brent Maier, at (415) 947-4256 or via email at maier.brent@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



for Michael Stoker
Regional Administrator

cc: John Sanders, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Jayne Harkins, Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission